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AUTHOR(S):

Kwak, Samgeun

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CITATION:

Kwak, Samgeun. Korean Women's Cultural Activities and Lifelong Learning Needs. Lifelong education and libraries 2002, 2: 89-105

ISSUE DATE:

2002-03

URL:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/43619>

RIGHT:

## **Korean Women's Cultural Activities and Lifelong Learning Needs**

Samgeun Kwak

### **INTRODUCTION**

Issues concerning women have drawn a lot of attention in almost every field in Korean society as the world has come to face the 21st century. It is already widely known that the social positions of Korean women are in both political and legal fields, and the economic participation of women, especially around the time of marriage and pregnancy, are severely limited. Compared to their political and economic power, however the cultural capacity of Korean women is indeed enormous, and this is closely related to, among different fields of life, education. This paper is to discuss women's cultural activities from the viewpoint of women's lifelong learning needs, which is for the benefit of establishing their own subjectivity in society and further to resolve gender inequality.

In order to understand the daily lives of women, education and learning are terms we shouldn't overlook. Learning, in this sense, is a cultural phenomenon in which a broad sense of all knowledge in life is initiated and learned. Even before the word 'education' was formally used, there had always been some kind of educational practice within family groups. To fully understand the daily activities of women, it is necessary to understand the educational conditions present in the family, as well as in schools and the society in which women have to live. Since human life can be understood on the basis of culture, and culture is mainly built and changed by education, one can easily see the close relationship between education and human life. The philosopher Immanuel Kant once said that humans are only ones who are able to be educated. Therefore, education can be interpreted as human life and culture in a broad sense.

Human life is dynamic, and when analyzed in terms of pedagogy, it can be concluded that education comes from various relationships. First is the education which comes from the relationship between the history of built-up experiences and the present living conditions within a time frame in mind. Second is the relationship of space, meaning education which comes from the relationship between environment, which includes nature and society, and human life. Third is the education which comes from all personal relationships between oneself and other individuals (Kim & Jeong, 1981). The activity of studying such relationships is the phenomenon of human life and education.

In many cases women experience, in both private and public spheres, that they have always been marginalized in a male-dominant society. The recognition of time, space and

individual relationships vary considerably. Women under the male-centered social system of patriarchy are responding in various ways in order to establish their self-subjectivity, and such response is expressed through their cultural activities. The examples of these types of response that are cited in this paper have been quoted from women I have interviewed previously (Kwak, 1998).

## **TYPES OF WOMEN'S CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

### **The Definition of Women's Cultural Activities**

In general, the word 'culture' was formed by the mixing of several different concepts, and therefore it may be used in various ways. Williams(1986: 24) has pointed out that the word 'culture' is one of the hardest concepts to define in modern times. The most basic concept 'culture' has been discussed here in relation to the development of mentality as a process of intellectual and mental development in humans (Thompson, 1993). Culture has been understood as a developmental process of advancing human ability and enabling them by being closely related to progressive human characters and assimilating them as a work of art. Culture basically pursues a higher value and quality, appearing in edification and artwork, and improving the present conditions of a human individual. Thus, cultural activity can be understood as individual activities to improve and develop self-subjectivity (Korean Women's Development Institute, 1998).

The traditional concept of culture, which reflects its basic characteristics, began to emerge from culture anthropology in the late 19th century along with the emergence of anthropology. The traditional concept of culture within culture anthropology may be defined as two separate ideas: a descriptive concept that is an 'arrangement of belief, practice, idea and value,' and a symbolic concept that is 'the naming of a particular order, class or phenomenon'(Tylor, 1871; White, 1940). The symbolic concept differs from the descriptive one because it emphasizes the symbolic ability of human action, and allows the understanding of culture or cultural products that are the results of symbolic action within a social context. It is important to understand culture within a social context on the ground that culture in reality is a historical and social product of concrete human action.

As feminism began to develop into various forms, there have been changes in people's recognition of the existence of women and their right. A movement of 'equality between male and female,' which conventional feminists had emphasized up to the 1970s, has turned into a new movement of, 'Let's celebrate the differences between male and female' in the 1980s. The idea of cultural feminism that supports feminine values raises a voice saying that people should focus on evaluating the knowledge, existence and values of women, instead of assimilating women into the mainstream of masculine discourse.

Women's cultural activities must be understood as a desire to find the genuine meaning of their existence and to obtain their traditional cultural experiences, not to just

live the life that is given to them. Thus, women's cultural activities need to be considered as self-development, as an expression of oneself, and as a chance to satisfy the motives for creative activities. The cultural feminists have been proposing richer, more plural views of the world rather than closed views through the eyes of men, and expressing feminine topics and images of life that are different from men's. Women's culture is a culture that expresses the subjective side of women through the expression of unique experiences and opinions of women (KWDI, 1995, 1998).

Women's cultural desire and structure are composed of the desire for a certain style of self-existence and experience, the desire of various ways and styles to express oneself, and a place and system to carry out these activities. In the beginning, each of the women's cultural activities started out from recognizing and sensing cultural deprivation, but they are now expressed as activities that can resolve such repression (KWDI, 1995). They are further evolved into processes such as, recognizing the unique conditions in which women are forced to live, reinterpreting the activities with a fresh view, discovering subjective will to overcome gender inequality, and finding traditional culture in terms of measures and styles. They also include processes such as reevaluating traditional styles, developing measures and styles that coincide with women's new lives, discovering the male-centered aspects of the presently existing cultural system, and the preparation of a system in which women may be at the center. The purpose of such activities is to allow not a few individuals but a greater number of women to get together, and experience a new and unique culture through mutual as one to empower their cultural force, grants great meaning to women's cultural activities.

### **Types of Women's Cultural Activities**

The domain of today's cultural activities do not only include the improvement of the cultural sensitivity, but have also expanded into creative activities that allow people to express and experience themselves, activities to experience a new culture, and educational activities of culture. The Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) has categorized women's cultural activities into aesthetic types, functional types, appreciatory types, inactive types, and subjective types. However, when these activities are seen from a point of view of women's daily learning experiences, women's cultural activities are found to need redistribution by focusing on the symbolic concepts of culture. The cultural activities as a symbolic concept are divided into women-centered cultural activities that support a creative development of women's unique lifestyles, and cultural activities that improvement and reformation of living condition in the territories of women's life (KWDI, 1998: 32-35).

The activities to establish the subjectivity of women who are being exclude from political power are expressed in various forms. Cultural activities that allow women to resist male-centered culture or political power in everyday life and to strengthen their own power can be distinguished into the following types. The first type recognizes

women's individual cultural desires on an aesthetic level, and expresses them. In the second type, women recognize that they are subjective human beings and, thus consider themselves to be so and express themselves accordingly. The third type demonstrates an ability to live abundantly and rationally and carries out a functional role of women. The fourth is a type in which women find a sense of unity and form a communal culture. The fifth type creates an alternative culture to solve problems of inequality in gender and class.

When we divide women's cultural activities into broader categories, the first two out of the five types above fall into women's subjective cultural activities, whereas the rest fall into living cultural activities. The fourth and the fifth types that fall into the category of communal social life and culture, especially, are the territories that need to be positively activated in the Korean society. In other words, it would be necessary to form a communal culture and strengthen the interest and support for alternative cultural activities to resolve the problems of gender and class.

There has been a continuous criticism that women's cultural activities in the past have very self-centered as well as family-centered (Kwak, 1995). A life of a woman is limited to caring for the husband and children, and other activities outside the family include social and religious activities through the interaction with schoolmates, friends, neighbors, and through the participation in other social organizations (Yoon, 1996). If we take a look at the research report, it states that it would be meaningful for women to have a cooperative study as long as they are still in close contact with their living headquarters since the learning experiences of women differ from those of men. For women, it is mostly obtained from various types of living situations involving family and relatives (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Kazemak, 1988). Adult women who have been excluded from public domains in the past seem to have a tendency to promote more participation in developing a direct relationship with the society and to secure their own boundaries for their activities. But, such desires of women are generally still unknown to many, and masculine thinking in relation to such matters is yet to be broken. Women, therefore, tend to fulfill such desires through various types of resistance.

## **CASES OF WOMEN'S LIFELONG LEARNING NEEDS**

### **Needs for Fulfilling Women's Cultural Desires**

Women basically promote activities of cultural experiences to enhance women's cultural sensitivity and they make an effort to display women's own unique styles of expression. The activation of small group activities that have recently become a great interest, especially within the community, have positively contributed to the formation of women's subjective culture.

As a result of interviews with Korean housewives, many women were shown to be

not confident of their own capabilities. They are frequently reminded that women are often weeded out and under the constant burden that their family will eventually ignore them due to their incompetence if they are found only doing the housework. Therefore, it is theorized that women in such cases conclude that they need activities outside the family and try to escape from their situations using whatever measures necessary. The following explanations of women reflect this very well.

**I experience the boredom from repetitive housework by engaging in learning.**

When I got married, it was still very common for a women to quit her job as she began to raise a family. So, I quit mine as well, but now that I think about it. I'm very regretful. To be honest, I used to be told that I was more competent than my husband. Although people say that children can be educated better when a mother stays home and nurtures them, I don't really agree anymore. Because I stay home all day and wrestle with them, my children tend to think that a mom should do everything for them, and that their mom is incapable of anything else. So, I'm taking calligraphy lessons there days. In the beginning my children didn't seem to like the idea, but they are now proud of their mom because she doesn't just cook and do the laundry like other moms do, but is good at something else as well. (Age 48, A housewife graduated from high school)

I've seen many housewives who have lost their self-identities and look worn out from everyday housework. Those wives usually end up feeling empty inside. I believe that this is due to the fact that have failed to recognize their value as a person. Thus, I wish to learn more in order to continue developing myself.(Age 26, A college graduate and an office worker)

After about 5 years of marriage, I began to think that this is not the way I should live. I felt like I had to do something. I started reading a novel, 'The Land' by Kyungri Park, and I continued to read more roman-fleuves with this as a start. Then I got to the state where I felt anxious if I didn't have any books to read, and now I didn't usually put the book down from my hand until I go to bed. I've had some people question my competence as a wife because I let the dishes pile up in order to read books. Then I tell them that everyone is different. One may think that housework is more important, but I think reading books is more important in my life. And, I actually encourage my other friend to read books more. There aren't many friends who I can share the afterthoughts from reading books with. By reading books I don't have to feel inferior to my husband, and have a more balanced conversation with him. (Age 37, A housewife graduated from high school)

**I see mass media that commodify women as sexual objects.**

The present Korea magazines have too many advertisements and unnecessary gossip that stimulate people's interest. Also, they tend to intentionally emphasize sexual oriented contents. Not only that, I think some of the luxurious advertisements are inducing extravagancy. Because today's TV depicts women as being narrow-minded, there aren't any images that stand out for an ideal women. When TV draws a female character as a single, but old woman or a modern career women, it is usually drawn so that people may draw a conclusion that women can't help but to be just women. No matter how outstanding the character may seem, she is always outsmarted by men in the end. Most female programs instigate too much consumption, and they are too simpleminded. Usually men cannot watch female times. I think reforming men's ideas is generally out of the question, and women are more troubled by such programs instead. (Age 36, College graduated housewife, working for a newspaper company)

Women's magazines tend to bring up a sense of shame rather than a sense of self-importance. Women's magazines lead us to develop interests in things that are of no use other than providing us with important information. They trigger people's for extravagance and emphasize the fact that women must be beautiful or women should put on make-up in order to look pretty. For these reasons, I have selected other types of magazines for my hair salon instead of the women's magazines. (Age 36, High school graduated hairdresser)

**I need to securing my own world.**

Women seriously see the importance of activities when they realize that they do not have their own world, in comparison with their husbands and children who have a unique world of their own. In other words, women confess that they start to lean something or get involved in activities to find their self-existence when they start to feel less of themselves or when their role as a mother become comparatively weaker as their children continue to grow out of their arms.

My family's life is my life, and I live happily as long I am doing my duty as a wife and a mother in the family well. But, there are times when I get depressed or become regretful when I feel left out. I feel like I'm alone, because my husband has his own work as my children have their own school life and friends. So I sometimes feel like they are telling me that I, as a wife and a mother, should not interfere with their own world... As I'm saying this, I realize that I have been overlooking such a matter and that I really need education for myself. I should try to educate myself more from

now on. (Age 43, High school graduated housewife)

Although I don't feel this way all the time, I often question myself as to whether I have become too plain from doing only house chores. After I send my children off to school and my husband to work, I usually start doing housework. Sooner than you know, it's time for my children to be back from school, and I start preparing dinner. This is how I spend most of my days. In the beginning I was happy with such a routine life, but as time went by, I began to be annoyed by such a repetitive and machine-like life. and I began to get upset when my husband did not understand that I can be stressed out for my own reasons, or when my children pour their problems all out on me. Of course, this was not completely resolve by having by my finding a job, but I have learned to control my emotions better by having my own occupation; my children also seem to understand me a little better because I am working. (Age 45, Middle school graduate, working in business)

### **Women's perception as Subjective Human Beings**

Women have been considered as subordinates or assistants for men in the past. In order for women to recover their self-esteem and see themselves as subjective human beings, women are now participating positively in many activities. Women are resisting against the social prejudice that does not recognize the difficulty and the importance of the women play in society as housewives.

Adult women have been greatly influenced by marriage system in society. A great number of women thought that their values in the family were determined and confirmed by their husbands, their in-laws and their children. Many have devaluated themselves by simplifying their role as housewives, and yet, there have been some women who proudly saw the importance of their role and the position as well. Many housewives, though, still have the social tendency not to acknowledge the value of a women's role in raising children to be the future pillars of society and nurturing the family as one of the most necessary and productive areas. In order for women to be fairly compensated for their work in society, their contribution to the society and the family must be recognised as that of men's. Housewives face the frustration and alienation when their significance in giving birth and taking care of children after marriage is not respected. There needs to be a change in social belief so people can see the meaning of women's lives from a different angle. Also, there need to be social activities to enhance the role and the value of women. Whether a woman has a job outside the family or not, the demand for her to perform all of the duties of mother and wife remain the same. Therefore, there should be necessary measures to reduce the burdens of housework by reducing social responsibilities for working women. As an example, we can consider a social expansion of women's role by correlating the housework with social work. Instead of making the sole responsibility of



women nursing babies, there will be an urgent need to increase the number of nurseries to reduce women's heavy loads of work.

There are many housewives who recognize the fact that women always exist as subordinates in the society in respect to men and that the same phenomenon takes place in the family as well. As long as women are not self-development, women will continue to be subordinate. And, with this theory, women express their opinions as the following.

### **Need for an egalitarian relationship between married couples**

It is difficult to maintain the heavy and simple housework even for a minute unless there is justification that I'm doing it for my family. People often say that the husband's success means the wife's success as well. But, while my husband is improving his skills by taking foreign language lessons at institutions early in the morning, working out at health clubs on the weekends, and soaking up new information that is pouring out like water faucets, I am stuck to obtaining only limited information from the women's magazines that I pick up while waiting for my turn at the bank....It really is a miserable feeling to find out that my knowledge is nowhere close to my husband's although I used to hear that I was more competent than my husband was before I married him. Shouldn't marriage allow the relationship to grow equally between the two? (Age 38, College graduated housewife)

The recognition of the fact that there is unequal investment of self-development between men and women in the family, like the women mentioned above, makes many women feel small when they compare themselves with men. Because women have a sense that they are losing chances for inner growth due to their heavy duties at home, more women are resisting against the present social structure of gender inequality so that they can remind people of the importance of their activities and improve their social position.

### **New perception on the role of housewives**

I don't mean to find the worth of my life by achieving any particular work, but to find it inside of my everyday life.... I don't believe that happiness lies in something extravagant, but in small things in our everyday life. I believe that joy can be found in anything if I try. Moreover, I don't believe being a housewife is an easy task at all. (Age 41, High school graduated housewife)

### **The contribution of housewives' role in the society**

I think a housewife should be considered as a full-time worker. Although raising a child to be a future pillar of society and taking care of the family are not only a necessary but also productive, I don't believe people see it is having such worth. In

order for women to receive credit for their contribution to society as men do, I think the importance of housewives' role should be equally recognized. (Age 26, College graduate, office worker)

My work as a nurse was very difficult and busy. I have thought about various hobbies to replace the dullness of my life after quitting my job. When I actually quit my job and become an ordinary housewife, I knew that it was a mere dream. In the beginning I was so happy because I no longer had to struggle with working, but as time passed, I started to realize that supporting my husband and struggling with my children was more difficult a task than working itself. (Age 39, housewife)

In its own way, being a housewife is a wonderful occupation. It is the most difficult job requiring great patience, wisdom and courage for a better life and family. (Age 50, College graduate housewife)

### **The Demonstration of Rational and Affluent Life Capacity**

An effort to develop women's potential capacities and to participate in economic activities that have been stored in the meantime is being practiced in many ways. In the society of the informationization era, people are especially emphasizing creativity and development of ability to take care of detail-oriented tasks by focusing more on areas where women can demonstrate their strength as women. The 'Center for Women Resources Development' that is growing in demands, is considered as an exemplary organization to support women's economic activities. The number of women who seriously want women's activities as preparation work to actualize their economic independence rather than a part of hobbies is growing every day. And women are resisting against the currently existing gender role system for the benefit of finding jobs. A woman insists on the for a lifelong occupation as the following.

#### **Women, too, need a lifetime job.**

I'm not really satisfied with my life, in which I have been idle with without any particular plans for the future, and sometimes feel very discouraged with my life that has nothing to be proud of. I have concentrated only on taking care of my family with the idea that depending on my husband and quietly assisting him by wishing that his business will go well somehow was the best I could do. But, now that I look back, I don't think that was the best after all. Because I always stayed home, I felt trapped. Because I had to depend on the money my husband brought home, money was always short; I was never really able to spend any money on myself. Women will be able to live more proudly if they have jobs, and are able to live for themselves.

Thus I think women should have a lifetime job as well. (Age 53, Housewife with three children)

Economic activities can bring women a consciousness that they are professional workers, and can also bring great meaning to women's lives since it can create a tension in trying to balance their lives between family and work. not only do they fulfill the economic purpose, but they also allow women to have more energy by discovering self-existence.

**A professional job allows a person to have greater self-esteem.**

I thought the look of a hard working mother and a father would benefit my children's education as well as my own self-development... Actually when I was entitled to housework only, my self-esteem was low and I didn't have much energy. With the opening of my pharmacy I began to feel energized and my health started improving although I felt physically more tired. I began to have higher self-esteem and self-confidence as a professional, when I looked at myself participating in social activities, and my outlook on society got broader. (Age 36, Pharmacist)

**I wish to have a job and improve myself.**

In the beginning when I started to work, I wanted to financially help my family as well as spend money for myself. But after about 8 years of working in this field, I'm starting to feel the importance that I'm a valuable part of this society. (Age 45, Some middle school background, working in business)

Although I started working for an insurance company because of financial difficulties in the family, I really enjoy working now. I am experiencing the beauty of a new world away from family boundaries, and I still can't forget the time when I got my first paycheck. It was my reward for my hard work....I feel worthwhile because I am making a financial contribution to my family, and this is why I plan to continue working. I originally wanted to be involved with volunteer activities, and now that I have financial ability as well, it will be easier to approach.(Age 45, High school graduated housewife, insurance company employee)

**The Formation of Women-Centered Communal Culture**

Today women need to expand their interests, from being centered on the family and its activities, outward to more involved in the local community. Women should work with the idea that are the leaders and have responsibilities as they are playing the center role in the formation of local communal culture. In the current situation where women's social

role is being more emphasized, women must get involved together as a group in the issues of the local community, school, and environment, and actively participate in the formation of local communal culture. The movement of formation of local communal culture that recently began with small groups is very encouraging.

In contemporary society where a particular person is judged based on his/her occupation, the social position of a housewife is widely classified by the husband's social position and is thus subordinate to the husband. The main activities of housewives in the past were to produce and consume the products of livelihood, but such activities have been extricated in today's family. Of course the basic operation of family life such as preparing meals is still considered to be the housewives' task. In other words, today's activities in the family are simple, repetitive, and of activities that do not demand great intellectual effort, such as cleaning, doing the laundry, and dishes. Most of a housewives' daytime is spent on house chores, but mentally most of their interest is on children's education, husband's health, and self-management. Educational interest in the family (for children, husband, and the housewife herself), especially, is enormous. Due to the expansion of family activities in school and the society, getting used to such an expansion is also necessary for modern women.

Just because women stay home and concentrate on house chores, it does not necessarily mean that they are irrelevant to the society in which they live. The social structure and environment have changed, and there is a great relation between the consuming activities of the family and the production activities of the society. Thus, it is very difficult to distinguish family work from social work nowadays. The results from any one of these actions, such as consuming food, clothes, industrial products, waste products, the TV watched from homes, newspapers, child education and others have not been related with society as a whole.

In the past, almost all of economic, cultural, and educational activities had taken place within the family, and there existed a gigantic unit called a family that had a separate boundary for each. Now, there still exists a formal boundary in the family and society, but the actual meaning of 'boundary' has weakened. Therefore, it is not possible for anyone to stay within the person's own boundary and live an alienated life apart from the society for long. I consider this phenomenon as the territory of the family being expanded rather than seeing it as the family being broken up. In order to manage the problems of living necessities well, women continuously need a connection with the society and must take part in organizational activities.

The issue of children's education comes under the same category. Even if women wanted to stay home only and nurse their children, the influence from the various mass media that has penetrated deeply into our families can be stronger than the moral influence of mothers. The influence from the environment within the local community, friends, and the game rooms that is enforced on children while they are commuting to school is tremendous as well. In such cases, would it be enough for a mother to simply sit

in the living room and verbally educate their children on proper behavior? Sometimes mothers need to form groups and make suggestions for the mass media, criticizing and presenting an alternate direction for improvement of TV programs. They need to get involved in local activities to clean up the environment; such activities have become a way of social participation. Nevertheless, only a small portion of women lay their interest in social participation, and the majority of women are not even aware of the fact that they are involved in such participation. The attitude of women regarding life is different from before and after they have recognized that they are in the mainstream of society. Thus, we must help women to have a concept that they are members of a community and let them participate in social activities, so they can become leaders in the forming of healthy local communal organizations. The following are exemplary cases of the Chungbuk Samsung regions' women's organizations that have up the local community that had been collapsing. These organizations were organizations of ordinary housewives and these cases, in which women have shown their resistance against the previous culture for the formation of local communal organizations, have become good examples.

**Women should change the local culture.**

The real estate business had been blooming in all towns when the Central Express Highway was built through the villages. The hard workers were treated as fools. The easy money that came by unfair businesses faded out the genuineness of labor by building cafes and bars next to each other, and people got used to gambling and playing around instead...The more families broke up the more teenagers fell into trouble. In the backyards of the school or in the empty houses, we could easily find butane gas containers rolling on the ground... Games which reminded people of the violence by adult criminal organizations, were often played in elementary schools... Because I couldn't give up on my family or leave my hometown, I had decided to make Samsung a place worth living with the thought that 'Let us, mothers do the work.' (Cho, 2000: 132-33)

The above case has been introduced in the Anniversary Seminar of the Association of Korean Women's Education. It is a good example of successful cases that fought against the pleasure-seeking culture of a male-centered society and misled teenagers' culture that is following the footsteps of adults, and brought in women's culture into the society. This organization requires a monthly fee of 5,000 won and supplies its expenses by making paper accessories and non-hazardous soaps. Also, by attracting people with non-profit performances the organization has actively lead cultural activities of local communities. The leader of the organization attended the 10th anniversary seminar and introduced the process of how the organization established women's self-identity and subjectivity and made contribution in the formation of local communal

culture. This actually earned support from men who had been indifferent of women's cultural activities in the society up to that point, along with the women's initial role as parents; this had evoked a great response from people. We now hope that such original women's movements will blossom in many other regions so that we can practice the empowerment of women.

### **Finding of Alternative Culture to Resolve the Gender Discrimination**

The system and the tradition of gender discrimination are considered the first target for reformation in our society today. Breaking up the gender stereotypes and forming a human view of gender equality have become one of the most important issues of today's education. People are demanding that the previous male-centered society would accommodate an equal society where men and women are treated the same, and a plural society in terms of class and gender.

Up until now, women have been excluded from the academic world. First of all, women have been excluded from imparting knowledge, the main stream of academics. Secondly, women have been excluded from research on various organization as the target of intellectual studies. The research on human behavior in organizations was designed mostly for men, and the life of women has been devaluated in the world of knowledge. The statement that women are sensitive, intuitive, emotional and expressive was a few of the reasons why women could not advance in science and participate in the academic world. One of the counter effects would be that women not value the work in the first place.

Responsibilities such as giving birth, raising children and taking care of house chores among many other duties of women are very heavy and important tasks that require wisdom. The tendency in devaluation of women is directly reflected on women's search for jobs, and the trend in which women cannot hold a high position at work has been set. It is not too surprising that women cannot secure a fair position in the academic world considering the fact that women are in charge of the most important tasks and yet, they are still not given enough credit. Many female scholars since Gilligan (1982) have studied women's different experiences out of the existing social culture, and some research findings have been reported in Korea since the early 1990s as well. (Kwak, 1992, 1995, 1998; moon, 1992)

When we study the development process of adult education that has lead women's actual cultural activities since the emancipation of Korea until the 1970s, the educational goals and contents for the maintenance and development of social systems are often discussed. This is instead of studying the individual improvement in terms of practicing adult education (Kim, Ina, 1993). However, the educational contents of information provided by the adult females, educational organizations in Korea since the late 1970s are found to be promoting self-improvement of individuals in general although they may vary a little (Kim, Kyunga, 1989).

In accordance with the research done by the Korean Women's Development Institute (1984), the contents of women's educational programs provided by women's organizations and women centers were made up of the enhancement of manners, promotion of consciousness, and hobby activity. The organizations that are in charge of women's social education were divided into three types of educational organizations—organizations that acknowledge the educational scholastic ability, organizations of vocational skills, and organizations of leisure (KWDI, 1991). Out of these three, the educational organizations for manners and leisure were found to be the most popular in terms of the number of people involved and the contents. We can see that many of those educational programs for female adults were focused on hobby activities and on improving manners, and that we needed more education to increase women's social participation (Kom, Jaein, 1994; Shin, Mishik 1994).

The social structure, which usually ends up with gender discrimination without women's participation, is least susceptible. Thus, some people are suggesting that the female adults' education should induce women's active social participation through vocation activities, volunteer activities, and other organizational activities (Kwon, 1991). Education to improve women's social positions and to resolve women's issues should be strengthened, and education to improve social status and relationships or to induce social activities and participation of women is urgently needed. In order to enhance women's sense of unity and promote a better social culture of gender equality, we need educations and organizations that can seriously strengthen women's empowerment in everyday life in the future.

### **Gender discrimination in the workplace**

Our society is full of structural discrepancies, and it requires women to be superwomen. It tells women to move out from their homes, demands them to find jobs of their own, and yet, it does not provide any necessary plans regarding such a matter. Isn't that what gender discrimination is about? I don't believe that such an issue can be solved in a short period of time. I think we are at the point where we should actually start making some definite plans, instead of just bringing up an issue and not doing anything about it. Women's issues should be backed up by policies, and society can change only when family education and school education are changed. (Age 36, Working for a daily newspaper, college graduate with children, in the 7th year of marriage)

Entering the 1990s, various voluntary education activities had been executed. The voluntary activities of each department, which the YWCA was developing in the meantime, should be given more consideration. Many voluntary organizations and small groups of women have been newly developed, and they are making a great contribution in activating women's social participation. Such are the organization and groups that can

possibly develop various activities to study the issues of environment, issue of education, and the issues of consumer's protection. They also seek for alternative plans and organize activities for an actual settlement of problems. In order to help women develop a communal consciousness, it would be desirable to approach the activation of social cultural activities with issues of environment, women, human rights, and the consumers' protection.

**CONCLUSION: We need organizations/channels to empower women**

The cases of women's learning experiences and needs, introduced in this paper, are the cases that show how women's perception and behavior can be freed from the male-centeredness of this society. The next necessary step would be to raise the voice of women who have been suppressed by the social system and use those to establish a new women's role in the family and the society as a way of a movement.

Women are the core subjects that bridge the gap between family and society. Thus, female adults are both directly and indirectly forced to have social participation. Nonetheless, many fail to recognize the fact, or even if they do, this realization is limited to a personal and family-centered boundaries, and the activities for the enhancement of women's consciousness and social participation are very rare. In general, women's cultural in Korea are limited to personal hobby activities. The answers, in which women are provided with chances of social cultural activities to improve their social position or to enhance the recognition of social participation, are very ambiguous.

Women have a tendency to become more supportive of social participation and to show a will to develop their lives more actively. Programs of the cultural activities that are not restricted to a level of mere hobby activities or the mannerisms of individual persons accommodate the demands to improve social relationships that individuals must develop. In other words, it would be necessary to reform the social system, in which hobby and manner based activities overemphasize individualism so that they will support the communal life of local communities. A life in which only 'I' and 'my family' are protected can no longer exist. Women are the core subjects that connect individual family's life and the communal environment of society, hence are a very capable group of people with great potential ability to recover the relationship and the unity between the family and society. The cultural activities that can correct relationships between nature and 'I', between matter and 'I', between the scientific technology and the environment, and the relationship between neighbors and 'I' will allow the recovery of the relationship and the unity between women and our society. It will also reflect the demand for participation of women.

The reason women cannot feel a sense of a unity, although the social participation of housewives is obvious, is an important issue that needs to be settled in relation to social cultural activities. As we saw earlier in this article, women are the main subjects who connect the family to the society, and they are inevitably forced to have social



participation. Women are simply not aware of the fact, and they lack opportunities to actualize consciousness of community. We should help women to realize that they are the core subjects in the society in which they are involved. In order to do so, we should popularize the programs of cultural activities that can improve peoples' ideas on the formation of a communal consciousness and enhance women's social participation. At the same time, there should be programs that allow women to personally take part in social participation.

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